Business Plan

2001 – 2002

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Introduction and executive summary

A new look

The Legal Services Society (LSS or the Society) has substantially revised its business plan for 2001 – 2002. We have made changes to both form and content to bring the plan in line with the requirements of the Budget Transparency and Accountability Act and to enhance co-ordination with the Society's annual report.

For the first time, the plan includes broad performance measures that will be reported on at year-end along with the specific business plan initiatives. This added step has presented a challenge, for while performance "output" measures are readily available and have been used in past years, overarching performance "outcome" measures are more difficult to formulate. This is partly because LSS is one of many justice system participants involved in processes that may affect the lives of clients.

For 2001 – 2002, our objective has been to identify "output" measures that directly relate to our statutory mandate, and act and report on these measures for a three-year period. Such reporting will include an explanation of variances (where applicable) in the reporting year. Over the course of the year we will also be examining possible "outcome" measures that may be useful in subsequent years.

To illustrate planning goals on a long-term basis, a multi-year schedule is included (see Appendix). This chart outlines the timespan of each business plan initiative up to and including April 2004.

We consider this plan to be a "work in progress" and anticipate that it will undergo further changes in the years to come.

Services for the future

LSS is striving to make the best possible use of new information and communications technology, as shown by the business plan initiatives for

the next few years. However, the eventual success of these strategies will be partly dependent on the steps taken by other justice system participants to pilot new approaches to access to justice. Such initiatives include simplifying judicial and quasi-judicial processes to make the legal system more accessible to clients. In particular, the Society will continue to partner with the Ministry of Attorney General to pilot new family law processes where resources permit.

A growing challenge

In the coming year, the Society will need to address a growing problem facing not only LSS, but legal aid plans across Canada: the increasing scarcity of private bar lawyers willing to take on legal aid clients.

This problem is described in more detail in "The planning environment" (see page 11). LSS is aware that it is increasingly asking lawyers to subsidize legal aid work from their own practices and pockets. The strain is showing most acutely in family law, but other areas are affected as well. The Legal Services Society calls on the provincial and federal governments to address this growing problem facing legal aid plans across Canada before the system ceases to function entirely.

* * *

The plan presented on the following pages is Society-wide in focus. It does not report on the many important initiatives being planned and undertaken by field offices to directly improve the relevance, access to, and quality of services to clients. All offices also undertake annual planning in consultation with their communities, and report at year-end on the services delivered. Their plans include local-level goals such as —

- changing family and duty court services
- expanding services for Aboriginal people
- making the best possible use of limited resources by working with community groups to provide more and better services (for example, creating community response networks to help seniors and at-risk people avoid abusive situations)
- conducting more public legal education sessions and updating self-help materials

- continuing to work for law reform in areas such as housing and appeals related to BC Benefits, Employment Insurance, and Workers' Compensation programs
- conducting outreach to remote communities to advertise available services

These goals are reported in more detail in local office plans.

The LSS *Business Plan 2001 – 2002* focuses on the structures and supports in place, or needed, to —

- support the overall delivery of services;
- ensure that all services delivered are of high quality; and
- ensure that LSS is accountable to its funding bodies and stakeholders.

The Legal Services Society's mandate and performance measures broadly outline the philosophy and rationale underlying all LSS endeavours. The Society's strategic goals provide an outline for carrying out these overarching objectives in specific ways. The business plan initiatives reported on here have been organized under the major categories of the strategic goals: mandate and service delivery, quality assurance, and fiscal resources.

Mission

The Legal Services Society is an independent, non-profit organization, created by statute to —

- provide effective legal services to BC residents living in poverty, particularly those people experiencing legal problems that threaten their liberty, security, and livelihood; and
- provide public legal education.

Since the state is often the opposing party in legal matters that affect people living in poverty, LSS can only truly serve its clients' interests by remaining independent of all levels of government and special interest groups.

The Society's mission is to —

- Ensure that legal representation is provided to those people facing serious legal problems who would not otherwise receive legal help.
- Ensure that education, advice, and information about the law are provided for all people in British Columbia.
- Ensure that our services are —
  - appropriately,
  - capably, and
  - respectfully delivered.
- Work with the government, the community, and the private bar to ensure the efficiency and effectiveness of all legal services.
- Deliver legal services to the Aboriginal people of BC that meet their particular needs.

Mandate

The Legal Services Society Act sets out a twofold legislative mandate for LSS: to provide legal representation for eligible applicants and legal education for the people of British Columbia. This mandate is contained in section 3 of the act, which states that:

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(1) The objects of the society are to ensure that

  (a) services ordinarily provided by a lawyer are afforded to individuals who would not otherwise receive them because of financial or other reasons, and

  (b) education, advice and information about law are provided for the people of British Columbia.

(2) The society must ensure, for the purposes of subsection (1)(a), that legal services are available for a qualifying individual who meets one or more of the following conditions:

  (a) is a defendant in criminal proceedings that could lead to the individual's imprisonment;

  (b) may be imprisoned or confined through civil proceedings;

  (c) is or may be a party to a proceeding respecting a domestic dispute that affects the individual's physical or mental safety or health or that of the individual's children;

  (d) has a legal problem that threatens

    (i) the individual's family's physical or mental safety or health,

    (ii) the individual's ability to feed, clothe and provide shelter for himself or herself and the individual's dependents, or

    (iii) the individual's livelihood.

The Society's mandate, as outlined on page 5, covers the areas of:

- criminal law: section 3(2)(a) and section 3(2)(d)(iii)
- immigration law*: section 3(2)(b)
- mental health act hearings: section 3(2)(b)
- family law: section 3(2)(c)
- poverty law**: section 3(2)(d)

* immigration law covers immigrants and refugees facing deportation

** poverty law covers a range of civil legal problems that most often affect poor people, such as foreclosures, landlord/tenant problems, and denial of Workers' Compensation benefits

In these different areas, the Society provides legal assistance, advice, and information through a continuum of services ranging from verbal, written, and videotaped public legal education initiatives, short service (to provide legal advice), duty counsel services, and diversion to other available suitable services, including legal representation by paralegals or lawyers.

Section 11 of the act requires LSS to balance its revenues and expenditures for each fiscal year unless the Attorney General and the Minister of Finance and Corporate Relations approve a Society plan to incur a deficit within a given year. Because the Society's business is, by nature, demand-driven, this requirement creates a conflict that the Board of Directors must deal with in the course of its managerial duties.

Performance measures

1. Provide application and referral numbers for the past three years in each area of law, along with an explanation of changes over the past year.

2. Identify trends in the proportion of unrepresented litigants at court.

   This measure will describe the percentage of individuals who are representing themselves in court (usually involuntarily) and is directly related to the performance of the Society. LSS will need to obtain actual numbers through the Court Services branch of the Ministry of Attorney General; however, these may not be immediately available as centrally compiled statistics are now under development.

   The federal Department of Justice and the Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics (CCJS) also consider this measure to be extremely relevant for assessing the potential unmet need for legal aid services. The Society's objective will be to establish a benchmark figure to assess various aspects of future performance.

3. Assess the nature and degree of individual requests for legal information through an analysis of:

   - the number of calls to Law Line from remote areas,
   - the number of publications distributed, and
   - the number of visits to the Electronic Law Library (ELL) and LSS Web sites.

   The number of visits to the two Web sites will be counted to create a baseline figure. In the years to come, LSS expects to be able to record the number of visits to specific Web pages within each site. Figures for the number of calls to Law Line and the number of publications distributed are available for previous years.

4. Report at year-end on the number of public legal education presentations made in local communities by the staff of LSS field offices.

This measure will be made possible by introducing a time-keeping system for poverty law staff, and may be reported on as a benchmark for 2001 – 2002.

Profile

April 2001

Overview

The Legal Services Society's head office is in Vancouver, British Columbia, while field intake and service delivery offices are located throughout the province. A map of the Society's branch offices, community law offices (CLOs), native community law offices (NCLOs), and area directors appears on the back cover.

A 15-member Board of Directors governs the overall operation of, and planning for, the organization. Funding comes from the provincial government, the Law Foundation, the Notary Foundation, and, indirectly, the federal government.

The Society provides legal representation and advice to financially eligible individuals who are —

- charged with a criminal offence that could lead to their imprisonment,
- applying for refugee status or facing immigration-related legal problems that could result in their deportation,
- experiencing family law problems related to family violence, separation, or divorce, or
- dealing with administrative or civil law problems (such as landlord/tenant disputes) that are affecting their physical or mental health, or their ability to feed, clothe or house themselves or their families.

The Society also provides legal representation to qualifying individuals with human rights complaints, and individuals requesting hearings under the Mental Health Act. Services are provided by LSS staff lawyers and paralegals, or through referrals to lawyers in private practice or funded agencies.

Services, education, and information

The Society provides legal services and public legal education related to the range of legal problems identified in the "Mandate" section. These services are provided by staff in local offices, and through phone services, written materials (including a growing number of translations in various languages), training for community advocates, and, increasingly, the LSS Web site.

The Society also has a Native Programs Department, which focuses on the development of legal education materials and training on legal issues for Aboriginal individuals and communities.

The planning environment

Fiscal challenges

The provincial government has recognized the Society's increasingly inadequate financial situation caused by a six-year freeze on government grant funding. By the end of 2000 – 2001, internal and external inflationary pressures had forced LSS to consider significantly cutting services.

The government stepped in and provided the Society with a $6.8 million increase to its base funding of $81.5 million for the 2001 – 2002 fiscal year. This will enable the Society to maintain services at the current level while reviewing potential cost-efficiencies.

The Society has also been fortunate in receiving significant grants from the Law Foundation to address issues of service quality and to develop and pilot new approaches to service delivery. These projects are identified in the "Five-year plan strategic goals" section on page 14.

The government's introduction of the Budget Transparency and Accountability Act (BTAA) has created additional administrative work and new pressures. Under the requirements of the act, the Society has had to alter its current procedures and practices to provide more financial and performance information much earlier in the fiscal year.

New opportunities

LSS is excited about the possibilities presented by new Internet, Extranet, and Intranet technologies to enhance service quality and increase access to legal services for many more British Columbians.

Specific initiatives related to these technological advances are described in the "Five-year plan strategic goals" section on page 14.

Family services

In the past year, two external reports were issued that describe the inadequacy of LSS services for family clients: *Where the Axe Falls: The Real*

Cost of Government Cutbacks to Legal Aid (conducted for the Law Society of BC), and *Access to Justice Denied* (released by the Women's Access to Legal Services Coalition).

When LSS implemented cuts to both financial eligibility and family coverage policies in the mid-nineties, it was anticipated that government services (family justice counsellors in particular) would provide alternative services for those clients no longer eligible for legal aid. As a result of these cuts, LSS referrals to lawyers for family matters dropped from 21,176 in 1994 – 95 to 13,828 in 1999 – 2000.

While family justice centres did experience an increase in family applications, LSS offices throughout the province were inundated with requests for service from individuals wanting help to deal with separation, child custody and access, and child maintenance. Because family justice counsellors serve primarily within the provincial family court, applicants seeking services for Supreme Court matters continued to rely on LSS services.

The Society re-introduced additional Supreme Court family coverage and raised the financial eligibility guidelines in the 2000 – 2001 fiscal year to qualify more applicants for family services. The result was a larger than expected surge in applications for family services (far beyond what was anticipated based on the eligibility and coverage changes).

This suggests that there is a significant number of people in the community whose needs are not being met by either LSS or provincial services. These people were encouraged to apply to LSS upon hearing that the coverage guidelines had eased up.

Increasingly, LSS poverty law staff fill the gaps and provide necessary services (387 — or 28% — of the 1,402 requests for service were directed to poverty law staff in September 2000). The provincial government's baseline budget increase will enable the Society to maintain its family services at the current level. The challenge for the future, however, is to find effective ways of providing some level of service to the many British Columbians whose needs are not being met by either LSS or provincial government services.

The private bar

One of the Society's current and significant concerns is the private bar's increasing reluctance to take on legal aid work. The number of lawyers willing to accept legal aid referrals dropped from 1,943 in 1995 to 1,498 in 2000. While this trend is particularly problematic in the area of family law, a similar pattern is emerging among criminal lawyers.

The increasing complexity of court processes and the difficulties posed by clients in crisis, coupled with the holdbacks imposed on tariff payments, make it simply uneconomical for private lawyers to provide legal aid services. This trend is showing up in other provinces across Canada as well.

These findings do not bode well for the future. Costs increase when local lawyers are not available and counsel must be brought in from other areas of the province. Discussion with government and other key stakeholders is urgently required to address this trend before it turns into a full-scale crisis.

Five-year goals

Over the next five years, LSS will continue to pursue strategic goals in three areas, as follows:

Part A: Mandate and service delivery

- Provide appropriate levels of service in each area of law, as mandated by the Legal Services Society Act.
- Provide public legal education to help more people understand and benefit from the law.
- Provide the best possible mix of service delivery models by continuously monitoring services and implementing any adjustments needed to meet changing requirements or take advantage of new opportunities.
- Work with Aboriginal people and their communities to develop and promote innovative and effective methods to deliver legal services and legal education.
- Work together with poor and otherwise disadvantaged communities throughout BC to develop innovative and effective methods to deliver legal services and information, and to remove barriers to obtaining legal services and information.

Part B: Quality assurance

- Improve the Society's quality assurance systems so that all service delivery and systems comply with Society policies, meet professional standards, and are effective in meeting clients' legal needs.

Part C: Fiscal resources

- Secure sufficient funding to meet the demand-driven nature of the Society's services.

Specific initiatives corresponding to these goals are described in detail on the following pages.

Part A: Mandate and service delivery

Goal 1 **Provide appropriate levels of service in each area of law, as mandated by the Legal Services Society Act.**

Service improvements

A1.1 Extended (Manitoba style) financial eligibility policy

LSS will examine the possibility of an extended financial eligibility policy. This analysis will provide information on whether an extended eligibility (and client repayment) scheme might become a self-funded method for providing services to the working poor whose incomes are over the current financial eligibility guidelines. It will also determine the start-up costs and support structure required for such a scheme.

Output

- Review the Manitoba program
- Examine the cost-benefit of proceeding with such a program (in full or in part)
- Report on these findings in detail if a decision is made to proceed to a second stage of analysis
- Develop a budget and implementation plan (if applicable)

Intended results/measurable outcomes

- Information compiled, allowing for an informed decision to be made regarding the suitability of an extended financial eligibility policy for LSS

Service changes

A1.2 Analysis of the *Winters* decision

LSS will analyze the 1999 *Winters v. Legal Services Society* case and its implications for the provision of services. The *Winters* case focused on the Society's obligation to provide services for disciplinary proceedings in prisons. While the court concluded that such a legal obligation exists, it

recognized that the Society has a "discretion to determine when mandatory legal services under s. 3(2) ought to rise to the level of legal representation."

Output

- Prepare a report analyzing criminal, family, and immigration services and the potential implications of the *Winters* case
- Examine whether different levels or types of services might satisfy the Society's legal obligations while providing an acceptable level of service for clients
- Discuss whether different levels or types of services might free up additional funds for under-served areas or additional numbers of clients

Intended results/measurable outcomes

- Information compiled to determine whether there might be less expensive ways to fulfill the Society's legal mandate and meet the needs of individuals with legal problems

Goal 2 Provide public legal education to help more people understand and benefit from the law.

Improved public legal education services

A2.1 Include field office information on the LSS Web site

The Society will expand its Web site to include more information on field office services. This initiative (carried over from the 2000 – 2001 fiscal year) will make access to field offices easier and provide readily available information on services.

Output

- Create new pages for up to eight local offices listing location, hours, unique services, and special events
- Amend map of BC field offices to include links to local pages where appropriate

Intended results/measurable outcomes

- Increased public access to information about local legal services, measured by number of visits to the pages

A2.2 Legal information for non-English speakers

The Society's Public Legal Education (PLE) Program will continue to provide more basic legal information in languages other than English. This is a four-year project to ensure that basic "rights" information about seniors' benefits, family law, BC Benefits, and immigration is accessible to more people in their native languages.

Using funds from a Law Foundation special grant, the LSS Public Legal Education Program began work in 2000 – 2001 on a 12-page adaptation of *When I'm 64: A Guide to Benefits and Services for People Aged 60 and Over*. This adaptation will be written for ESL readers and translated into seven languages.

From the information gathered so far, the PLE Program estimates that it will take a full year to complete each series of booklets, at an annual cost of $35,000. Additional funds will be required to carry out the initiative.

Output

- Produce an ESL publication in one area of law
- Adapt and translate this ESL publication into seven languages
- Distribute 10,000 copies of each translation within the relevant cultural communities

Intended results/measurable outcomes

- Reach potential readers who are unable to use existing English language information

Goal 3 **Provide the best possible mix of service delivery models by continuously monitoring services and implementing any adjustments needed to meet changing requirements or take advantage of new opportunities.**

Service delivery models

A3.1 Family law services on the Internet

Funded by the Law Foundation, this multi-faceted initiative will look at how the Internet can best be used to support a range of family law services, from legal information and referral to structured assistance and advice. The project will include —

- a public Web site offering information, self-help materials, and training documents, as well as links to other appropriate sites;
- closed e-mail discussion lists for community advocates and offices providing limited assistance to clients through lay advocacy;
- self-help clinics; and
- limited referral services.

This initiative will take three to four years to fully complete. By the end of the fourth year, LSS anticipates that it will have served hundreds of additional family clients who would not be eligible for current services.

Outputs

Year one outputs

- Establish protocols regarding content and links with other key agencies — such as the Family Maintenance Enforcement Program (FMEP), Dispute Resolution, Family Justice, Ministry of Attorney General, and the pro bono site of the Law Society/Canadian Bar Association
- Plan, build, and test a trial Web site
- Evaluate the limited referral pilot initiated late in the 2000 – 2001 fiscal year
- Establish the first closed e-mail discussion list

Intended results/measurable outcomes

Year one outcomes

- Evaluation process identified
- Community advocates identified

Long term outcomes

- Increased public use of the Web site to access family law information and services
- Increased communication among advocates
- Expanded services to clients

Goal 4 **Work with Aboriginal people and their communities to develop and promote innovative and effective methods to deliver legal services and legal education.**

Aboriginal access to justice services

A4.1 Aboriginal child welfare

LSS will pilot early intervention approaches to reduce the rate of child apprehension in Aboriginal communities and/or shorten the length of time that apprehended children stay in care. Funded through the Law Foundation, this initiative will be carried out using a combination of public legal education materials and community development/training strategies. The pilot program may require two years to complete.

Outputs

Year one outputs

- Complete a finalized project plan
- Select test locations
- Produce materials and modules
- Implement program at first test site

Intended results/measurable outcomes

- Reduction in the rate of child-parent separation on reserves
- Reduction in the number of Aboriginal children apprehended by the Ministry for Children and Families
- Increase in the number of apprehended children placed with other families on reserve
- Increased use of supervision orders over apprehensions
- Shorter stays in care for apprehended children

A4.2 New service development in under-served areas

This initiative was introduced in 2000 – 2001 but was incomplete by year-end. The objective is to provide new services to areas of the province that are receiving fewer resources relative to other regions.

These services would give Aboriginal people more opportunities to resolve legal problems that may affect their ability to feed, clothe, and house themselves and their dependants, or maintain their livelihood. Such under-served areas include the Fraser Valley and mid-Vancouver Island, where significant numbers of Aboriginal people are not receiving services.

Outputs

- Compile a written plan to expand services to Aboriginal people in the two selected areas
- Carry out the plan

Intended results/measurable outcomes

- Increased use of LSS services by Aboriginal people in the two regions under consideration

A4.3 Poverty law services on reserves

This initiative is concerned with providing effective services to individuals on reserve who are experiencing poverty law problems as a result of actions taken by band councils. Some of the consequences of such decisions may be loss of housing on reserve, loss of employment, denial of income assistance, or prohibited access to community services, including water or sewage services.

Over the past two years, LSS has supported this initiative by providing a small budget to help fund representation services for Aboriginal people who are in disputes with their band councils. The Society is now considering using some of this money to provide a continuum of services, beginning with public legal education and mediation, and extending to arbitration where applicable. The objective of this initiative is to pilot such a program.

Outputs

- Use the designated budget to represent individuals experiencing poverty law problems as a result of actions taken by their band council
- Use a portion of the funds to advance cases dealing with the authority of councils over the distribution of housing
- Develop a written proposal and costing for a new program that will encompass a range of services, beginning with public legal education and ending with representation

Intended results/measurable outcomes

- Protection of the rights of individual Aboriginal people living on reserve to basic life necessities

Work together with poor and otherwise disadvantaged communities throughout BC to develop innovative and effective methods to deliver legal services and information, and to remove barriers to obtaining legal services and information.

Legal services in under-served areas

A5.1 Expand Law Line to remote communities

Initiated in 2000 – 2001, this is a plan to extend Law Line service from its current Lower Mainland user area to remote and under-served communities in BC. Initial planning indicates a strong interest at the community level; however, staff need training in Aboriginal legal information, and local referral resources have to be identified. The intent is to keep extending this service to additional communities and to monitor the need province-wide.

Outputs

- Extend Law Line services to two additional regions
- Hold six information and training sessions in the two regions
- Distribute 500 – 1,000 brochures in each of the regions
- Train all Law Line staff in Aboriginal legal education

Intended results/measurable outcomes

- Increased Law Line calls from targeted areas
- Local community workers know about and refer people to Law Line

Self-help

A5.2 Develop PovNet as a significant poverty law resource

The purpose of the project is to strengthen the anti-poverty advocacy network by providing —

- a public Web site with current legal information about various poverty law subjects and links to anti-poverty issues, organizations and resources; and
- closed e-mail discussion lists where advocates can share information and advice.

LSS contributes to the project by participating on the discussion lists and the steering committee, and by providing financial and administrative support. This year's goal is to increase the number of community advocates using the closed e-mail lists to share information and advice, and to increase the Web site training resources in the area of housing and Canada Pension Plan benefits.

Outputs

- Increase the use of closed e-mail lists for community advocates by 10%
- Double the content of the housing database
- Post two new training tools or guides on the public Web site

Intended results/measurable outcomes

- Increased level of activity on the closed e-mail lists, indicating that advocates have better access to timely information and advice
- Increased number of visits to the public Web site
- Increased feedback from Web site readers

Part B: Quality assurance

Goal 1 **Improve the Society's quality assurance systems so that all service delivery and systems comply with Society policies, meet professional standards, and are effective in meeting clients' legal needs.**

Improved services to clients

B1.1 Produce an Aboriginal law guide

This guide will provide all field offices and community advocacy groups with an outline of laws affecting poverty issues related to Aboriginal people (such as income assistance on reserve). It will contain substantive information on law issues, as well as practice advice.

Outputs

- Publish the first edition of a legal manual devoted entirely to Aboriginal issues (such as employment on reserve, income assistance on reserve, housing matters, Bill C31 issues, and Canada Pension Plan issues)
- Make the manual available to all field offices and to other organizations requesting copies
- Develop a written plan to continuously review and update the manual as new case law emerges and legislative changes are introduced

Intended results/measurable outcomes

- LSS field offices have access to the specific knowledge needed to provide poverty law services for Aboriginal people

B1.2 Substantive poverty law guide

A counterpart to the Aboriginal law guide identified in B1.1, this guide will outline substantive poverty law considerations. It will include levels of service considerations and practice advice on roughly 20 topics ranging from income assistance appeals to foreclosures and landlord/tenant problems.

Outputs

- Publish the first edition of a substantive poverty law guide and distribute it to all field offices
- Develop a written plan to continually review and update the manual

Intended results/measurable outcomes

- LSS field offices have access to the specific knowledge and strategies needed to address substantive law issues for each type of poverty law problem

B1.3 Office automation project

This initiative began in 2000 – 2001 and will require another year to complete. The initial phase reviewed whether there might be opportunities to enhance caseload handling by staff lawyers and paralegals through office automation. This project requires additional time for staff to develop a business case for new spending on automation.

Outputs

- Develop a business case for office automation, including a needs assessment, a review of available technology, a cost analysis, and a pilot phase for testing

Intended results/measurable outcomes

- Enhanced service to clients by staff lawyers and paralegals
- Documents produced more quickly

Improved field office and head office operations

B1.4 Cross-cultural and Aboriginal awareness training

This project was initially funded by the Law Foundation for 2000 – 2001 but was postponed so that a comprehensive staff training plan could be developed first. The initiative will have an impact on individual staff members, the workplace, and services to clients.

The objectives of the project are to —

- improve quality of services to legal aid clients,

- improve relationships among colleagues through a better understanding of different values and perspectives,
- improve quality of the workplace for all LSS, CLO, and NCLO staff,
- reduce turnover, and
- improve opportunities for the development of individual potential.

Outputs

- Deliver three- to five-hour training sessions in cultural diversity to all LSS, CLO, and NCLO field staff between October 2000 and October 2001; this training will be delivered centrally through existing workshop activities (where possible)
- Deliver three- to six-hour training sessions in Aboriginal awareness to all LSS, CLO, and NCLO field staff; this training will be delivered regionally with local offices, and will be made available to selected members of the local bar and community groups

Intended results/measurable outcomes

All LSS, CLO, and NCLO staff will:

- Understand the importance of diversity
- Understand the legal, cultural, and social history of Aboriginal peoples in BC
- Understand the harm in discrimination and stereotyping
- Consider and apply cultural diversity concepts when developing systems, programs, and initiatives in order to avoid systemic discrimination barriers
- Benefit from the increased productivity, creativity, and innovation of their colleagues

B1.5 Executive/management reporting capability

This project involves installing new software to ensure that all of the relevant information in the Case Management System is accessible in regular reports. This information is needed to monitor caseloads and case

outcomes, as well as to generate useful client summary data. The project was largely completed in 2000 – 2001 but needs several more months of work.

Outputs

- Develop and maintain centralized Web-based collection of information that includes relevant statistical information and user-friendly reporting tools

Intended results/measurable outcomes

- Ability to report on primary effectiveness measures, enabling the organization to manage its business better
- Executive information available for risk management and more timely decision-making

B1.6 Knowledge management for LSS staff

This initiative continues from 2000 – 2001, and involves introducing improvements and additional information through the Legal Resource Centre (LRC) Web page on the Intranet.

Outputs

- Design and develop LRC Web page as part of overall Intranet design and site

Intended results/measurable outcomes

- More efficient distribution of legal updates to LSS staff

Improved administrative service delivery

B1.7 Quality assurance for the tariff

Funded by the Law Foundation, this is a three-year project involving LSS and the private bar. LSS will develop and pilot a number of initiatives to ensure the quality of legal aid services. These may include —

- a mentoring program,
- initiatives to enhance the circulation of information critical to quality of service for legal aid clients,
- development and recognition of best practices,
- encouragement of cross-cultural competence, and
- quality control mechanisms for identifying inadequate service.

Outputs

- Develop a range of quality assurance incentives and quality control mechanisms for the private bar

Intended results/measurable outcomes

- Evaluation processes in place for each initiative to determine its effectiveness in enhancing the quality of service to clients (this could act as a cost-benefit analysis of each initiative to determine its relative merit in this regard)

B1.8 Tariff processing enhancements

This objective is multi-faceted and includes —

- implementation of a fast-track billing system
- development of electronic billing forms; and
- exploration of electronic billing.

Tariff processing changes have been identified that will improve the billing system for legal aid services provided by private bar lawyers. A series of Law Foundation-sponsored initiatives will result in less complicated support and billing systems for private bar lawyers over a three-year period. Reduced system complexity should attract new lawyers and encourage a number of seasoned lawyers to once again provide legal services to the poor people of BC.

Outputs

Implement:

- Electronic billing
- Electronic funds transfer
- Web-based online tariff guide summaries and forms
- Electronic authorizations

Intended results/measurable outcomes

- Better support through less complicated processes
- Increased productivity through reduced administrative overhead
- Less time spent by lawyers on administrative overhead (for instance, understanding processes and filling out forms)
- Increased number of private bar lawyers willing to provide legal aid services

B1.9 Time-keeping for staff lawyers and paralegals

The objective is designed to ensure that the skills of staff lawyers and paralegals are used to maximize service quality and economic efficiency. While staff family lawyers and staff criminal lawyers have been using an off-the-shelf time-keeping software package for some time, an in-house WebTime program has been built for poverty law staff. The next step is to make this superior in-house package available to criminal and family staff lawyers.

Outputs

- Fully implement the WebTime system for poverty law staff and collect one year's worth of information
- Develop and implement a plan to switch the criminal, family, and immigration lawyers over to the new WebTime program

Intended results/measurable outcomes

- Ability to report fully on the type of poverty law services being delivered, the extent of these services, and the cost
- Full range of reports available for each area of law

- Enhanced service to poverty clients because advocates, managing lawyers, and funded agencies will know exactly how the time and resources of each office are being spent
- Ability to locally produce accurate reports detailing the activities in each office, including non-tariff activities (public legal education, community development, and law reform)

B1.10 Human Resources Information System (HRIS)

There is an urgent need to implement a comprehensive HR/Payroll solution that will provide a more reliable approach to processing large volumes of payroll data and increase organizational effectiveness through access to employee data.

The current HRIS/Payroll system is DOS-based and is largely incompatible with the LSS technical environment. This system has failed on a regular basis, to the point where payroll has been threatened. The HR Department has limited access to the data contained within the existing system and experiences difficulty extracting accurate reports.

In order to reduce reporting difficulties, staff are required to manually enter data into multiple platforms. This results in duplication of effort and increases the risk of inconsistent entries.

Outputs

- Implement a Web-based, Society-wide HRIS/Payroll system by April 1, 2002 that will allow LSS to use accurate and relevant employee data to respond to user requests for information in a timely manner

Intended results/measurable outcomes

- Ability to access reliable workforce data and generate reports to provide LSS staff with key information for making strategic decisions

Part C: Fiscal resources

Goal 1 **Secure sufficient funding to meet the demand-driven nature of the Society's services.**

Recovering expenses

C1.1 Legal fee recovery through property liens

The objective of this program is to recover legal fees from those clients who have significant equity in their family assets that is not accessible when they apply for legal aid, but becomes available at a later date. The money recovered will enable the Society to cover more family cases. Once the liens legislation amendment is introduced by government, four to six months will be needed to put the program in place.

Outputs

- Develop the submission and draft legislation for government through a collaborative undertaking with the ministry
- Develop a full costing and implementation plan
- Implement the new program immediately (upon introduction and proclamation of legislation)

Intended results/measurable outcomes

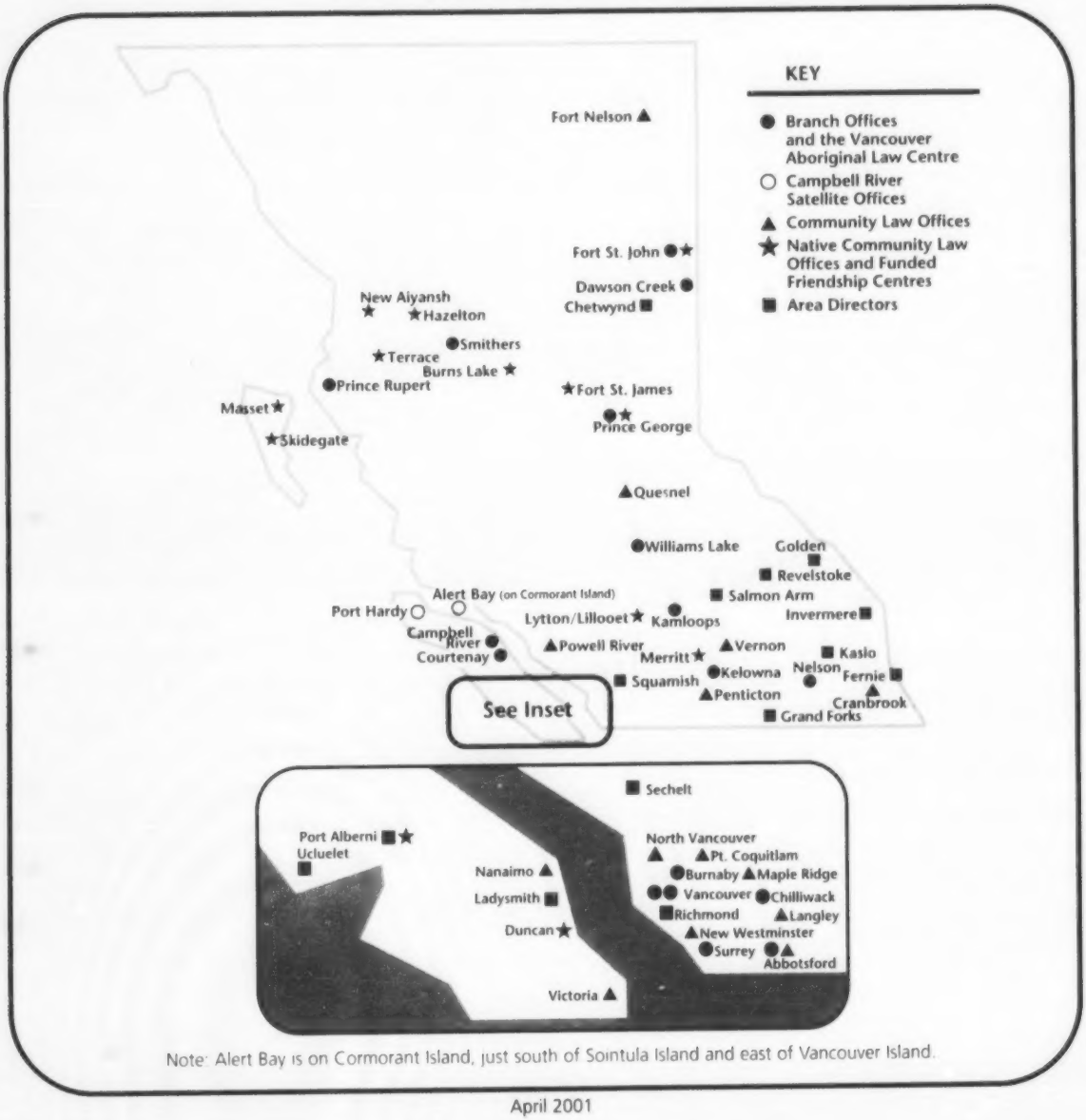
- Services extended to hundreds of additional clients through a fair program of cost recovery

Appendix

Legal Services Society
Preliminary Business Plan for
2001 – 2002, 2002 – 2003, 2003 – 2004

Initiative Number	Topic	April – Sept 2001	Oct – March 2001 – 02	April – Sept 2002	Oct – March 2002 – 03	April – Sept 2003	Oct – March 2003 – 04	April – Sept 2004
A1.1	Extended financial eligibility							
A1.2	Analysis of the *Winters* decision							
A2.1	Field office Web pages							
A2.2	PLE in other languages							
A3.1	Family Law Web site							
A4.1	Aboriginal child welfare							
A4.2	New services for Aboriginal communities							
A4.3	Poverty law services on reserves							
A5.1	Law Line for remote communities							
A5.2	Ongoing PovNet development							
B1.1	Aboriginal law guide							
B1.2	Substantive poverty law guide							
B1.3	Office automation project							
B1.4	Cross-cultural and Aboriginal awareness training							
B1.5	Executive/management reporting capability							
B1.6	Knowledge management for LSS staff							
B1.7	Quality assurance for the tariff							
B1.8	Tariff processing enhancements							
B1.9	Time-keeping for staff lawyers and paralegals							
B1.10	Human Resources Information System (HRIS)							
C1.1	Liens program							

Map of Legal Aid Offices



Note: Alert Bay is on Cormorant Island, just south of Sointula Island and east of Vancouver Island.

April 2001